

# Strategic Issue: St. Louis County's Role in the Region



## Trends Impacting the County's Role In The Region

Our region is often poorly defined. Some consider the St. Louis region as just the combination of the City of St. Louis and St. Louis County. Others think of the region in terms of the Missouri seven counties that comprise the Metro West. Metro East residents in Illinois feel as though they are included as part of the region as well.

St. Louis County is the population and employment center for the region. As such, St. Louis County has a certain responsibility for regional leadership.

The region contains the fifth highest number of local governments in the nation with 771 units of local government. When considering taxing authority, the St. Louis region jumps to the highest in the nation at 26.8 taxing units per 100,000 people.



## Perspectives on the County's Role in the Region

Regional leadership was identified as an opportunity for the County to pursue in the next five years by County officials and the general public .

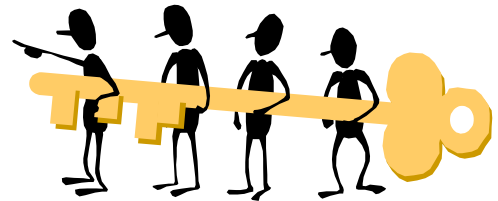
Nearly 40% of residents surveyed were concerned with government fragmentation and too many cities in the County.

The most serious problem identified by the public opinion survey was the lack of cooperation between the City of St. Louis and St. Louis County.

A significant majority of residents felt that St. Louis

County should have more authority over County-wide planning. There was support for stronger regional planning and the creation of a plan to control growth and sprawl.

## Key Themes from the County's Role in the Region



- ' Leadership and vision must be strengthened to address issues of regional importance in the bi-state metropolitan area. Although many excellent leaders in business, government, and civic organizations exist, few evaluate regional impacts and make decisions of regional significance.
- ' With the significant number of governments in the region, collaboration is needed to effectively address issues of regional impact.
- ' The region should continue to pursue shared bases of funding in order to collaboratively support regional functions. Shared revenue successfully supports the TWA Dome, Lambert Airport, and the Zoo-Museum District. Other regional initiatives present opportunities for revenue sharing.
- ' Continued enhancement of education, skills, and job training is a regional issue in order to keep the St. Louis area a competitive player in the market.
- ' There is a need for greater regional planning to address the sustainability of our region. A single county or jurisdiction cannot be successful without partnerships and overall leadership.

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# Introduction: The Case for St. Louis County's Role in the Region

As a major governing body in the St. Louis region, St. Louis County has a significant leadership role to play. The County is the biggest single political jurisdiction in the metropolitan area and in the State of Missouri. It ranks among the very few in the United States with a AAA bond rating. Whether or not the County desires a regional leadership role, it is looked to by other parts of the region for guidance, example, and resources.

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What is the current role of St. Louis County as a regional leader, and what could its future role be? The topic of St. Louis County's role in the region is one of four critical issues that were identified through government input and citizen engagement phases of the 2000-2004 St. Louis County Strategic Plan. This issue paper is meant to help facilitate a discussion about the topic of the County's role in the region. The issue paper will focus on how St. Louis County can strengthen its role as a regional leader with respect to the key issues of regional planning, growth management, diversity, and coordination between governmental entities. Each of these key issues emerged repeatedly during the strategic plan information gathering process.

For the purposes of this issue paper, the following definitions of terms are offered for clarification:

## St. Louis Region / Metropolitan Region

The bi-state, twelve county Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), including the City of St. Louis and the counties of St. Louis, St. Charles, Franklin, Lincoln, Warren, and Jefferson in Missouri, and the counties of St. Clair, Madison, Monroe, Jersey and Clinton in Illinois.

## Region

"A central core city and its contiguous suburbs and future growth areas, or a rural area that is commonly influenced or impacted by crosscutting economic, physical, and social development challenges" (Dodge, 1996, page 38).

## Leadership

Exercising initiative and innovation, taking risks, demonstrating results, and implementing and maintaining disciplined accountability measures.

## Growth Management / Urban Sprawl

Although growth management is often the preferred term in academic and professional circles, citizens more commonly use and identify with the term urban sprawl. Throughout the 2000-2004 Strategic Plan input process, the term "urban sprawl" was used by citizens, and was defined differently by those who used it. This issue paper does not attempt to define urban sprawl, but merely uses the term as it was used by the citizens. Thus, for the purposes of this issue paper, the terms urban sprawl and growth management are interchangeable.

The major premise of this issue paper poses the question of what leadership roles St. Louis County can pursue within our metropolitan region. What is not being questioned is St. Louis County's presence as a key player in the region. Because St. Louis County is the most populated county in the State of Missouri and the economic center of the St. Louis Metropolitan region, with both the largest number of jobs and the largest resident labor force, the County is recognized as having a significant role within the region. However, in order to determine what potential leadership roles St. Louis County can play within the region, it is necessary to present background information on St. Louis County and the twelve county metropolitan region for review.

# Background Data and Trends

## St. Louis County Profile

### ! Population

St. Louis County is home to over a million people, making it the most populated county in Missouri with nearly 20% of the state's population. Additionally, St. Louis County has the most affluent population with an average household income nearly \$15,000 higher than the State of Missouri average.

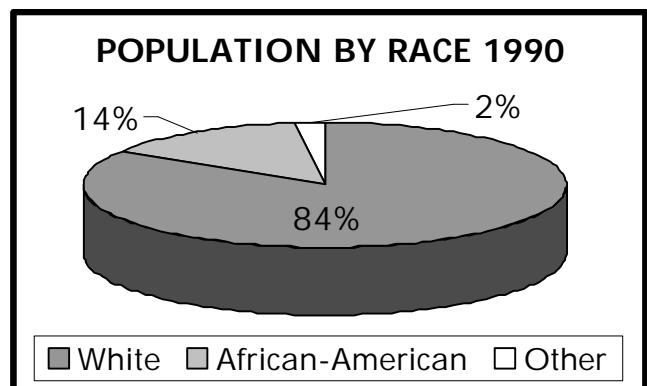
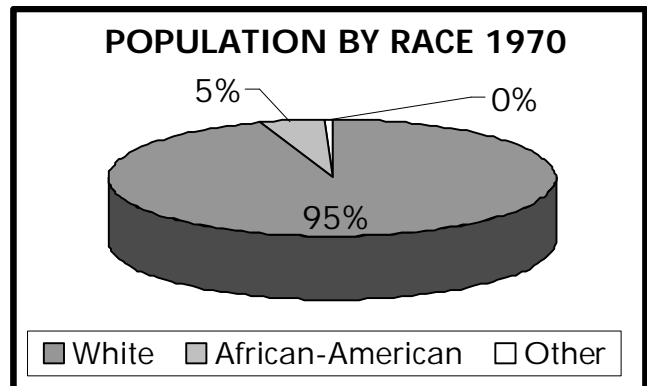
St. Louis County experienced a growth period from 1940 to 1970 primarily due to migration from the City of St. Louis. The County's population grew from 247,000 just before World War II to 951,000 by 1970. Since 1970, however, population growth has stabilized, growing just 2% in the 1980s and an estimated 1.7% in the 1990s. The 1990s also experienced more people moving out of St. Louis County than moving in, due to the growth shift from St. Louis County to the collar counties of St. Charles, Jefferson, Franklin, Lincoln, and Warren. This is primarily due to the large tracts of land available for development, and new, affordable housing.

ST. LOUIS COUNTY TOTAL POPULATION 1900-1990		
YEAR	POPULATION	% CHANGE
1900	50,040	-
1910	82,417	65%
1920	100,737	22%
1930	211,953	110%
1940	274,230	29%
1950	406,230	48%
1960	703,352	73%
1970	951,671	35%
1980	974,180	2%
1990	993,508	2%

The population of St. Louis County has been diversifying since the 1970s. The white population has declined, while the population of Asians and Pacific Islanders has had the highest rate of growth, increasing 79% since 1970. The African American population has also grown significantly due to migration and births, increasing by 27%.

### ! Employment

St. Louis County contains about a quarter of all the jobs in the State of Missouri, and almost half of the jobs in the St. Louis metropolitan region. After a period of significant job growth during the 1980s, employment in St. Louis County decreased marginally during the recession of the early 1990s, and resumed growth in the late 1990s. The County's employment base has become more diverse throughout the 1980s and 1990s as jobs shifted from manufacturing to the service sector. The service sector in St. Louis County experienced the greatest increase in employment between 1987 and 1997, rising from approximately 25% to 33% of all jobs in the County. St. Louis County has



continually had lower unemployment rates than the national and metropolitan region. Since 1993, the County's unemployment rate has been below 4%, and reached an all time low of 2.9% in 1997.

### ! Housing

With more than 400,000 homes, St. Louis County contains a diversity of housing types, ages, and styles. Nearly half of the single-family homes in the County are over 40 years old, and while many older neighborhoods remain attractive, some suffer from deterioration and disinvestment. In general, homes with the greatest value tend to be located in the central corridor of the County, which extends westward from the City of Clayton to the City of Wildwood. Housing in the inner ring, which runs from the City of St. Louis corporate limits to Interstate 170, has experienced the most decline.

New housing development boomed in St. Louis County from the 1960s to the mid-1980s. The past decade has seen a decline in the number of new homes being built, as a result of the diminishing supply of readily developable land. Smaller subdivisions and in-fill development have begun to represent an increasing share of new housing development.

### ! Government

St. Louis County is divided among more than 200 political jurisdictions, including St. Louis County, 91 municipalities, 23 schools districts, and 43 municipal fire departments/protection districts. Approximately 66% of the County's residents live in municipalities, ranging in size from 11 residents in the Village of Champ to 54,000 residents in the City of Florissant. Annexations and incorporations have expanded the population and size of the municipalities, while reducing the unincorporated area of the County.

Municipal services for unincorporated areas are provided by St. Louis County, and in incorporated areas by the respective municipal government. St. Louis County does provide some services, such as police and code enforcement, to municipalities on a contract basis. Service delivery responsibilities vary considerably from municipality to municipality, with some municipalities providing a complete line of services and others providing limited services.

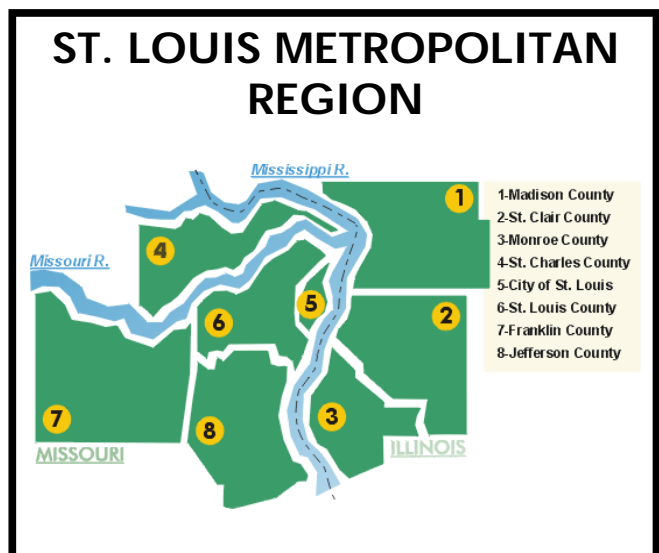
## St. Louis Metropolitan Region Profile

### ! Population

The bi-state metropolitan region consists of City of St. Louis and twelve counties, including the counties of St. Louis, St. Charles, Franklin, Lincoln, Warren, and Jefferson in Missouri, and the counties of St. Clair, Madison, Monroe, Jersey and Clinton in Illinois. The City of St. Louis, the seven Missouri counties, and the five Illinois counties total over 2.5 million in population. Missouri counties comprise 76.51% of the total regional population and Illinois counties make up 23.49% of the region's population.

Overall, the region has grown steadily since the 1980s, after a loss in population between 1970 and 1980. On the contrary, the population of the City of St. Louis, the heart of the metropolitan region, has experienced a 14.8% decrease in the past nine years. Even more dramatic though, is the loss of the City of St. Louis population over the past 50 years at approximately 58%.

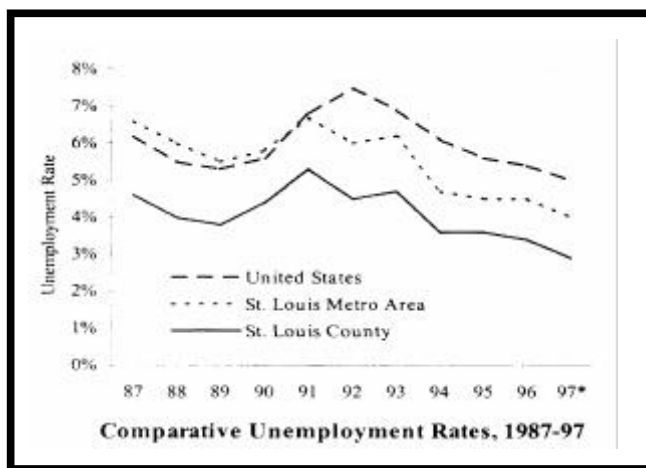
The population trend for the St. Louis region as a whole is a pattern of movement toward more rural areas. St. Charles County is one of the fastest growing counties in the United States with a dramatic increase in population in the past decade. However, as these outlying areas grow in population, they become more and more developed.



The racial composition of the region has remained consistent in the past decade with 81% of the population white, 17.6% African American, and 1.2% Asian. Similar to other metropolitan regions, people of color are disproportionately located in and near the central city. In the City of St. Louis, people of color are the fastest growing population, increasing 6.6% from 1990 to 1996, compared to a 2.2% increase for the region as a whole. African Americans comprise nearly half of the City of St. Louis's population, and more than one-fourth of the population of St. Clair County, IL.

### ! Employment

The economy of the St. Louis metropolitan region is one of the largest and most productive in the United States. Based upon composite measures of economic output, the region's economy ranked 13<sup>th</sup> in the nation in 1992. In terms of employment, the number of jobs in the region have enjoyed considerable growth since the 1980s. From 1980 to 1990, jobs increased by 28%, and from 1990 to 1996, by 8.6%. In fact, joblessness is currently at a historic low for the region, as unemployment rates have steadily dropped since the early 1990s. The region's unemployment rate has been below the national rate for the past 8 years. As of February 1997, the unemployment rate was 4.3%, compared to the national rate of 5.3%.



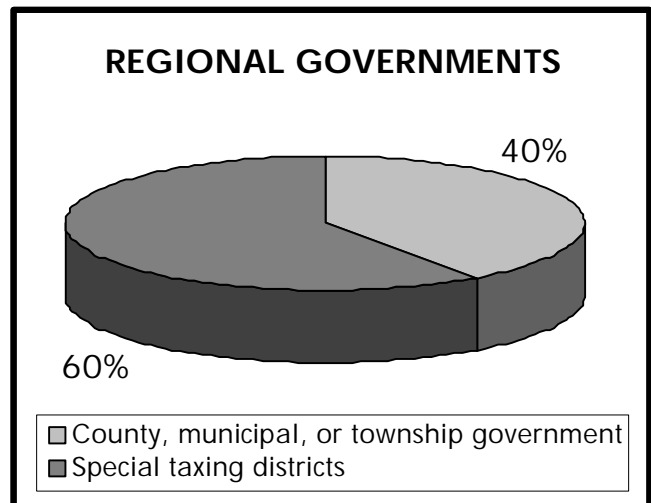
### ! Housing

With over a million housing units, the St. Louis region has a variety of high quality and affordable housing. The region's mix of housing types include single-family, apartments, and condominiums in the

City of St. Louis and the suburban counties, as well as small-town, rural housing in the outlying counties of Franklin, Jefferson, Clinton, Jersey, and Monroe. The region's housing market has consistently been one of the most affordable in the country. Nevertheless, the regional housing market is also one of the most racially segregated in the country. In a 1997 study by University of Michigan Professor Reynolds Farley, St. Louis was found to be the 11th most racially segregated city in the United States.

### ! Government

In 1996, the total number of local governments in the St. Louis region was 773. When compared to 35 other metropolitan areas throughout the nation, the St. Louis region ranks as the fifth highest number of local governments. When the number of governments is adjusted for geographic area, the region contains 12 units of government for every 100 square miles. If adjusted for population, the St. Louis region has 31 governmental units per every 100,000 people. Moreover, 60% of the region's governments are special taxing districts, performing specialized functions, such as education, fire protection, and ambulance service.



# Indicators of the Need for St. Louis County as a Regional Leader

Four principal means of information gathering were utilized in determining the critical issues which St. Louis County faces in the next several years: focus groups and a telephone survey of St. Louis County residents, one-day retreat of St. Louis County government officials, trend analysis conducted by the St. Louis County Department of Planning, and nine public forums throughout the County to solicit comments and perspectives from St. Louis County residents. Together, these methods identified four critical issues facing St. Louis County:

- ! The County's Role in the region
- ! Reinvestment in Older Areas
- ! Transportation
- ! Services to Unincorporated Areas

The following discussion summarizes key points regarding the need for focused attention on the County's role in the region.

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## Telephone Survey and Focus Groups

In December 1998, Attitude Research Company (ARC) conducted a series of focus groups on behalf of St. Louis County Department of Planning. Focus groups were comprised of residents of unincorporated and incorporated areas of St. Louis County. In February 1999, ARC conducted a telephone survey of 617 St. Louis County residents. Again, individuals from both incorporated and unincorporated areas of St. Louis County were interviewed. Key comments and findings from the ARC research reveal how County residents currently view the County's role in the region and how it could strengthen its position in this regard.

Many individuals in the focus groups expressed that the County could take a lead role in terms of regional economic development. The majority of focus group and telephone survey respondents were supportive of airport and MetroLink expansion as important economic development initiatives for the St. Louis region. The issue of sprawl was generally perceived as bad for the City of St. Louis as well as the County by focus group respondents. Even so, most telephone survey respondents did feel that St. Louis County is moving in the right direction.

Major issues facing St. Louis County as identified by

telephone survey respondents included: the lack of cooperation between St. Louis City and County, urban sprawl, government fragmentation, and too many cities in the County. Issues regarding race relations, storm water control and air quality were felt to be serious problems that the County could also address, but these issues were not identified as highly problematic as the others.

## Government Officials Retreat

In February 1999, elected officials of St. Louis County government, department directors, and key

### Telephone Survey Results: Major Issues in St. Louis County



- ' Urban sprawl
- ' Government fragmentation
- ' Lack of cooperation between the St. Louis City and St. Louis County
- ' Too many cities in the County
- ' Race relations
- ' Storm water control
- ' Air quality

staff met for a one-day retreat to identify key strategic planning issues. A major theme arising from the input of these government officials regarding the County's role in the region was that the County could play a leading role in the St. Louis region. Retreat participants identified several areas that the County could play a greater regional leadership role including, mass transit improvements, stronger regional planning, and the use of the County's resources to assist smaller communities with fewer resources in improving services and the physical environment.

***A major theme arising from the input of St. Louis County elected officials, department directors, and key staff was that the County could play a leading role in the St. Louis region.***

## Community Forums

Nine public meetings were held across St. Louis County to generate diverse input from County residents about what they believe are the most critical issues facing the County. Public input was also received through a telephone comment hotline and through an e-mail account established for this purpose. This public input process reached over 400 people with 11% identifying regional leadership as a critical issue facing St. Louis County. The issue of urban sprawl was identified as a critical issue by 8% of public engagement participants.

## Trend Analysis

Key trends identified by St. Louis County's Department of Planning that are consequential in considering the County's role in the region included: As the region's demographics change, the County will become increasingly racially diverse. The challenge for the County is to attract and retain middle-class African Americans as well as other people of color. This is particularly important in light of aging and deteriorating neighborhoods throughout the County.

The County is in a vicarious position regarding government financing. Tax base changes and County changes may make it difficult to finance many small governments. With increasing fragmentation, dissent and competition between government entities for greater tax bases result. Clearly, this is a trend that the County could work actively to reverse.

# The County's Involvement in the Region

Before we consider how St. Louis County can further enhance its leadership role in the region, it is necessary to examine how the County has exercised regional leadership up to the present time. From the information gathered during the input phase of the strategic planning process, it is evident that government officials and County residents see tremendous potential for the County to further develop and strengthen its role as a regional leader in three key areas: regional planning and growth management, diversity, and coordination between governmental entities. The following is a brief review of the County's recent involvements in each of these three areas.

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## Regional Planning and Growth Management

The issue of "urban sprawl" was continually identified through the information-gathering process as critical for St. Louis County to address. The telephone survey found that almost 2/3 of the 617 respondents want something done about "urban sprawl," and 8% of the 400 citizens who provided input through the public engagement process felt that "urban sprawl" was a critical issue facing the County. It was clear, however, that "sprawl" meant different things to different people. It was referenced as a "lack of open space," "lack of proactive planning," "unregulated growth," constant movement west, "lack of land use controls," and "growth at the expense of other areas." Regardless of how citizens define urban sprawl, it is clear that the issue of unmanaged growth and development is perceived by St. Louis County residents as increasingly unhealthy for our region.

According to the East-West Gateway Coordinating Council, the St. Louis region is one of the top five most rapidly "sprawling" metropolitan areas in the country. The Peirce Report, a 1997 study of the St. Louis region by urban experts Neal Peirce and Curtis Johnson, reported that since 1950, St. Louis City has lost 58% of its population, while the "the region has subsidized a thinly spread pattern of suburban growth. While the population of the entire 12-county region grew just 35% from 1950 to 1990, the amount of developed land soared 355%" (Peirce Report, 1997, p. 14). Peirce and Johnson point out that the massive loss of population from the center

city, the growing loss of population from inner-ring St. Louis County suburbs, and the rapid growth and development continuing further and further away from the metropolitan core has severe consequences.

Currently, readily developable land site in St. Louis County is close to exhausted, yet the fiscal costs of "sprawl" are great. The infrastructure costs alone needed to support the continued growth and development westward are enormous. From a regional perspective, the growing isolation and deterioration of the City of St. Louis will ultimately have a tremendous impact on each and every other county in the St. Louis region while further fueling "urban sprawl."

St. Louis County's current efforts to address the issue of urban sprawl have been primarily in partnership with other regional agencies. For example, the most significant involvement in the past several years has

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been with East West Gateway coordinating Council's Initiative for a Metropolitan Community, a regional, intergovernmental initiative to address the issue of smart growth. The Page Avenue Extension, despite all of its controversy, was another area in which the County exercised its leadership in partnership with the Regional Commerce and Growth Association to address the issue of westward expansion and development.

Additional efforts of regional collaboration include the County's coordination with the Bi-State Development Agency, East-West Gateway Coordinating Council, and the Missouri Department of Transportation in the highly controversial yet critical efforts to expand MetroLink and the Lambert St. Louis International Airport. The County is also a partner with St. Louis 2004 Initiative for Sustainable Neighborhoods, in which the County communities of Lemay, Wellston, and Jennings have been targeted for revitalization efforts.

***From a regional perspective, the growing isolation and deterioration of the City of St. Louis will ultimately have a tremendous impact on each and every other county in the St. Louis region while further fueling "urban sprawl."***

## Diversity

The diversity of our region, as well as our nation, continues to change dramatically. According to 1990 census data, the St. Louis region has a population comprised of 81.3% white, 17.3% African American, .9% Asian and Pacific Islander, and .5% Hispanic. African Americans comprise nearly half of the population of the City of St. Louis and are more than one-fourth of the residents of St. Clair County. St. Louis County's African American

population is at 14 % and is primarily concentrated in the northern quadrant of the County.

According to the trend analysis undertaken by St. Louis County Department of Planning, the County is becoming increasingly diverse with an estimated increase from 14% in 1990 to 23% in 2020. Since 1996, white births have dropped significantly in St. Louis County while African American births peaked in 1993, declining only slightly since then. Currently, 26% of all births in St. Louis County are people of color.

Of those who responded to the telephone survey, 36.6% feel that race relations are a significant problem facing St. Louis County. Large numbers of respondents to the telephone survey (72.8%) felt that County government could make economic and job development a priority. Interestingly, nine in ten African American respondents felt that economic development, particularly with respect to workforce development and job placement, is critical for the County to address compared to seven out of ten white respondents. Clearly, issues of economic justice were of great concern to the majority of African-Americans represented.

In the public forums, race relations was an issue brought up numerous times as both a weakness and a threat that St. Louis County could address. Quality of life was a key theme that emerged in the public engagement sessions as well as at the government officials retreat. Attracting and retaining residents and businesses in the face of demographic and economic change coupled with maintaining aging buildings and infrastructure were identified as critical to assuring a high quality of life in St. Louis County.

Racial polarization is one of the core problems facing the St. Louis region. Based on 1990 census data, Reynolds Farley of the University of Michigan concluded that St. Louis is the 11th most segregated city in the United States. Furthermore, according to the 1995 study, "Discovering Common Ground: Creating the Spirit of Community," St. Louisans perceive the quality of race relations in the St. Louis metropolitan area to be on the decline, while more than 80% of all participants in this study said that good race relations are very important to a

community's quality of life.

Currently, St. Louis County is addressing issues of diversity and racial polarization largely through its involvement with other major community-led initiatives. The County has been a member of the CommUnity St. Louis Collaboration Council, a community-wide effort to dismantle racism spearheaded by the National Conference for Community and Justice, and is involved in the St. Louis 2004 region-wide effort to combat racism.

County Executive Buzz Westfall took a pro-active lead in combating racism in 1994, when he initiated a Unity Rally at the County Courthouse in response to a Ku Klux Klan rally. The Unity Rally was extremely successful, and led to the County's commitment to continuing with this initiative in the future. The County spearheaded the Unity Rally again in 1995 in collaboration with numerous community organizations and other local governmental entities. Since the last Unity Rally, however, the initiative has lost momentum. While the Unity Rally may not be the appropriate vehicle for the County to continue to address issues of racism in the region, it represented a pro-active effort on the part of the County to take a public stand against bias, bigotry, and hatred.

## Coordination Between Governmental Entities

One of the concerns continually noted by citizens in the public engagement portion of this strategic planning process was both local and regional governmental fragmentation, lack of coordination, and the separation between St. Louis City and St. Louis County. Interestingly enough, this issue also emerged as a critical one from the government officials retreat. The theme of fragmentation was noted as the top external weakness perceived by government officials, as they expressed concerns regarding the region's parochialism and the County as non-regional. This has long been a concern for residents in the St. Louis region, and has been examined in numerous studies over the decades. Most notably, Confluence St. Louis issued a task force report in 1987 calling for the re-entry of St.

Louis City into the County as a municipality. This recommendation was highly controversial, and was never implemented given its significant political and public roadblocks.

Citizens expressed their frustration with the fragmented nature of the County and municipal governments in the public engagement phase of the strategic planning process, as they continually stated they would like to see increased coordination, leadership, and vision. Citizens also expressed a desire for the County to take a lead role in developing partnerships between County government and municipalities as well as between municipalities.

### ! Intra-Government Fragmentation

St. Louis County government plays a dual role in terms of service delivery. It provides county-type services to the entire County (i.e., arterial roads, revenue collection, public health services, a jail, and others). It also provides municipal-type services to residents of unincorporated areas (i.e., planning, zoning, police protection, and public works). In addition, the County also makes several services available to municipalities on a contractual basis. Municipal governments vary in the services that they provide their residents. Some provide minimal services and may contract with other municipalities, the County or private contractors to meet their needs. As a result, it is often unclear to County residents who is responsible for delivering which services. This is further complicated by the fact that the County is comprised of 91 municipalities ranging in size as well as many unincorporated areas.

### ! Inter-Government Collaboration

In the St. Louis region, we are increasingly experiencing the impact of operating in a fragmented manner. Issues such as MetroLink expansion, "urban sprawl," and environmental health falter because of political divisiveness, parochial thinking, and lack of regional vision. The notion that "we are all in this together" is outweighed by a "not in my backyard" mentality. As a whole, the St. Louis region is not versed in intergovernmental collaboration. For example, there is a sense of "winning and losing" when a

corporate headquarters decides to locate in the City instead of the County or vice versa.

In the instances when the County has engaged in collaborative leadership efforts, the importance of operating from the perspective of addressing regional needs has paid off, as the following examples demonstrate:

**Household Hazardous Waste Collection and Disposal**

The St. Louis County's Department of Health has led the way, in conjunction with the St. Louis-Jefferson Solid Waste Management District, for the development of a regional solution to household hazardous waste collection and disposal. In 1996, the Department of Health contracted Confluence St. Louis to undertake a regional study of household hazardous waste collection. Today, successful steps are being taken to implement the recommendations from that study in order to develop a regional household hazardous waste collection and disposal facility. The Department of Health continues to push this effort forward in collaboration with the City of St. Louis, the Metropolitan Sewer District, the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, the EPA, and other county and municipal governments. The County's understanding of the need to address this issue from a regional perspective makes this initiative a win-win for the region and provides the propulsion to move the effort toward implementation. This effort has also recently resulted in the securing of state funding toward this end.

**Resurgence of the City of St. Louis**

St. Louis County government has been actively involved in several initiatives related to the resurgence of the City of St. Louis. The County played an integral role in the development of the Kiel Center and America's Center, as well as in the recruitment of the Rams and the building of the TWA Dome.

**Empowerment Zone**

In perhaps the most notable effort in recent years, St. Louis County, St. Louis City, the City of East St. Louis, and the City of Wellston came together to collaboratively apply for the federal Empowerment Zone grant. As a result of this collaborative

partnership, the region was awarded this designation of \$100 million over the next ten years. The Empowerment Zone designation will allow low-income and deteriorating areas in the St. Louis region the opportunity for extensive redevelopment and rejuvenation. Clearly, this regional collaboration was good for the region as a whole as well as each individual jurisdiction.

**Potential Growth for St. Louis County as a Regional Leader**

There are many examples where St. Louis County has demonstrated innovation, risk-taking, and collaborative leadership to address regional issues. Many of these are mentioned in the above sections, and there are many more to be sure. However, while it is clear that the County is involved in addressing the issues of regional planning and growth management, diversity, and coordination between governmental entities, there is extensive room for truly developing itself as a regional leader in each of these areas. The County has the political, economic, and social weight to be a premier exemplar of regional leadership in the St. Louis region. It is the biggest, most populated, and most economically developed county in the St. Louis region; its position in the region could not be better for leading our region successfully into the 21st century.

With issues of regional planning, growth management, diversity and intergovernmental coordination, the County currently tends to join initiatives that are spearheaded and led by community and civic organizations. The Initiative for Metropolitan Community, CommUnity St. Louis, and the 2004 Sustainable Neighborhoods initiative are all examples of this. While each of these efforts are critically important for the County to be involved in, they are not the direct result of the County's initiative.

# Best Practices from Around the Country: Regional Leadership Initiatives

William R. Dodge, author of Regional Excellence: Governing Together to Compete Globally and Flourish Locally, cites five key trends that make regional decision-making absolutely imperative. These include: the increasing number and instances of major crosscutting challenges facing community leaders and citizens today; the disengagement of citizens from government and public involvement; the lack of appropriate government structure to address regional challenges; the growing economic, racial and fiscal gaps from community to community; and the growing imperative of successfully competing in a global economy (Dodge, 1996, 11). Each of these trends are not only true of communities across the nation, but also of the St. Louis region.

As a result, effective public leadership today must be collaborative and engage the participation of private, non-profit and other public entities. The decision-making process must become a horizontal model of participation across sectors and political boundaries rather than a vertical, unilateral, top-down model.

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## Regional Planning and Growth Management Best Practices

### ! State of Maryland Smart Growth and Neighborhood Conservation Initiative

The Governor of Maryland initiated a government-led, public engagement process to collect the input of citizens, local governments, and key interest groups on the issue of smart growth. As a result of the input collected through this public engagement process, a series of broad-based, common goals were derived which allowed for a collective starting ground across entities for the development and implementation of a smart growth initiative. Because this process began with input from all key stakeholders, the buy-in from surrounding city and county governments was easier. These goals arrived at for Maryland's Smart Growth and Neighborhood Conservation initiative included:

- , Save the region's most valuable remaining natural resources before they are forever lost.
- , Support development in areas where the infrastructure is already in place or being planned by targeting state resources to those areas
- , Save taxpayers from the unnecessary cost of building the infrastructure required to support far-flung sprawl development.

The Smart Growth and Neighborhood Conservation program has been very successful. Though this was a State-led initiative, the established goals and the process were set up in a balanced, win-win fashion for all groups involved, including the State, local municipalities, urban and rural interests, environmentalists, and businesses. Maryland also passed legislation in 1996 that withholds state financing of county developments such as new roads, sewers, or schools that are outside of State-designated smart growth areas.

### ! State Legislation in Tennessee

The State of Tennessee passed groundbreaking legislation in May 1998 that required each county in the state to establish a coordinating committee to develop its county growth plan. The growth plan must identify urban growth boundaries for each municipality within the county and identify planned growth areas and rural areas within each county. Each plan also must demonstrate that it is promoting "compact and contiguous high-density development into its planned growth areas--while protecting valuable agricultural, forest, recreation, [and] wildlife management areas" (Peirce, October 1998). Each county and city must then come together to determine how their planned growth patterns fit together and agree on joint plans. The coordinating committees were each given until January 2001 to submit their plans, and the plans

should account for anticipated growth for the next 20 years. The legislation also provides for a dispute resolution process to resolve conflicts between cities and counties over growth management plans.

### **! Organized Regional Councils and Coalitions**

According to the Planners Web, an online journal for planning commissioners, "the most effective strategy for combating sprawl involves cooperation among communities within a county or region." While this is a difficult strategy to implement, regions around the country are modeling regional cooperation. For example, the Metropolitan Council of the Twin Cities in Minnesota is a regional council that addresses land use planning and the provision of key government services. This council is comprised of one council member from each of 16 districts and one chairperson. All are appointed by the governor. Another example is the metropolitan area of Portland, Oregon, which created a regional governmental group in 1979 called Metro. Metro is primarily involved with land use and transportation planning. As a final example, in Cleveland, Ohio, Cleveland's inter-ring suburbs organized themselves into a coalition to address the issue of sprawl.

### **Diversity Best Practices**

The National League of Cities believes that knowledge and education are critical for governments to effectively address these challenging issues. As such, they are putting all of their top leaders through an education process, an informal dialogue process, and a seminar on racism. The National League of Cities contends that these issues are critical for governments to address to ensure a healthy, equitable community; to decrease racial and income disparities; to address racial barriers and polarization that weaken and hurt our community; as well as to ensure continued economic growth and development of regions within the nation and the global economy.

The National League of Cities has published several reports on the issue of governance and diversity, and began the Diversity and Local Governance Project which provides workshops and seminars on

this issue for local communities. Based on much of their data collection from conversations and interactions with local communities and officials, several common themes emerged around this issue. These include:

- , Local officials need leadership skills that will enable them to bridge deep racial divides and effectively represent the hopes and values of a diverse community.
- , Local officials must take the initiative to stimulate and participate in open and honest dialogues about race and racism.
- , Local officials need to employ collaborative problem-solving strategies that include diverse constituents in the decision-making process of governance, so all have a stake in a common destiny.
- , Local officials must affirm the role of city hall in overcoming historic barriers and creating a diverse municipal workforce that reflects the priorities as well as the demographics of the community it serves (National League of Cities, Governing Diverse Communities, p. viii).

### **National Trends of Widening Disparities**

According to William R. Dodge, growing racial and socioeconomic disparities in regions across the country inhibit effective regional problem solving and decision making. Dodge points to the following national trends to demonstrate these widening disparities:

- ' Regional income disparities between central cities and suburbs have widened over the past two decades.
- ' Residential racial segregation continues across all income levels.
- ' White flight continues to be a dominant practice in regions.
- ' People of color are a growing part of the population and are more likely to live in poor communities.

### **! Community Relations Council in Columbus, Ohio**

In 1992, Columbus, Ohio addressed their increasingly diverse population by creating the Community Relations Commission "charged by law to provide leadership to educate citizens about cultural diversity; identify and resolve community tension; and eliminate racism and discrimination." The Commission is comprised of a diverse group of twenty-two members appointed by the mayor and confirmed by the county council. The Commission holds a community-wide event, the Gathering for Understanding and Peace, to address issues of diversity. Members of the community discussed hate crimes, formed study circles to dialogue about racial matters, and advocated for programs to address multi-cultural education and dismantling racism.

Interestingly, this group also developed Unity Day in 1993 as a community response to a Ku Klux Klan rally which St. Louis County also did in 1994. The Columbus Unity Day continues today, but is now focused primarily on youth.

### **! Study Circles in Lima, Ohio**

In Lima, Ohio, the City of Lima partnered with local clergy and a local university to develop a race relations program in conjunction with the Study Circles Resource Center. Ultimately, this project involved over 1250 people in small dialogue groups, or study circles, to discuss racism at 48 community religious institutions. This program is now being expanded to the business community and neighborhood organizations, as well as being incorporated into the high school curriculum of the Lima public schools.

This effort developed out of the racial unrest following the Rodney King beating in Los Angeles. The mayor of Lima approached local clergy and the local university to see if they would partner in such an effort, and many positive outcomes have resulted, including communication network across racial lines; local cultural institutions pro-actively reaching out to engage people of color more actively in their programs; friendships have developed across racial and denominational lines; and a documentary on the experience was made and aired throughout the country. The Lima

approach to race relations has become a national model that over 30 communities have looked to for assistance and direction.

### **! Developing Accountability at the YWCA in St. Louis, Missouri**

One local example of an organization committed to addressing issues of racism both internally and externally is the YWCA. The CEO of the YWCA has taken it upon herself to ensure that her Board and staff are educated about the "many 'unseen' ways that racism impacts each of us, people of color and white people, on a day to day basis." Their "One Imperative Task Force" developed a training curriculum in which every YWCA staff person participates, as well as a self-assessment of all YWCA programs and policies to ensure that they are anti-biased and aligned with the organization's commitment to eliminate racism. Finally, the YWCA will issue an annual report card to detail strategies and opportunities for improvement.

## **Intergovernmental Collaboration Best Practices**

Peirce and Johnson are fond of using the term "citistate" to refer to a region "consisting of a historic central city surrounded by cities and towns that have a shared identification, function as a single zone for trade, commerce and communication, and are characterized by social, economic and environmental interdependence." According to them, city, state, and county boundaries become somewhat irrelevant in the citistate paradigm. For the citistate, or region, to survive collaboration is the most important method of operation. From a regional perspective, if one part of the metropolitan area is failing in whatever capacity, it will impact each individual area as well as the whole entity.

### **! Metropolitan Mayors Caucuses in Chicago, Illinois**

Chicago Mayor Richard Daley invited mayors and representatives from the 269 municipalities that comprise the six-county region to attend a Metropolitan Mayors Caucus. Approximately 40 mayors attended each caucus session to dialogue

about common approaches to regional issues. These sessions are closed-door and media is excluded so that caucus attendees can truly address the issues rather than focus on political posturing. One regional issue that is now being addressed through this process is how the region can comply with the Clean Air Act, given the area's current "non-attainment" status. (Peirce December 1998).

### **! Information Technology**

Partnerships between governments are becoming more and more imperative as public concerns and problems are not limited by political and geographic boundaries. However, such partnerships are still extremely difficult to navigate and make succeed. One area where intergovernmental partnerships are having success are through the use of information technology.

Harvard University has found that in such information technology partnerships, issues of technological compatibility are always a challenge. But the greater barriers to success were found to be much more basic: funding constraints; lack of trust and cultural conflicts between jurisdictions; resistance to collaboration; and lack of political empowerment. In other words, politics and turf. It is here that the issue of leadership becomes so critical. In order for governmental entities to partner and successfully work together, risk-taking, innovative thinking, and collaborative leadership are absolutely key.

### **! Tax Revenue Sharing in Baltimore, Maryland**

The Greater Baltimore Committee, a governmental group that advocates a regional approach to problem solving, is working to develop an arrangement to local city and county governments to share tax revenue from new businesses that locate in the Greater Baltimore region. The intent of this initiative is to not only regionally distribute tax revenues but also to encourage regional cooperation in attracting and retaining corporations to their metropolitan area. Baltimore understands that attracting new businesses to locate in the region is to the benefit of the region as a whole and that competition between jurisdictions for such businesses is counterproductive. Instead of setting

up a win-lose scenario, the Greater Baltimore Committee is in working to achieve a regional win-win for the City of Baltimore and its surrounding counties. (St. Louis Post-Dispatch, June 13, 1997).

### **! Tax Base Sharing in Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota**

Minneapolis-St. Paul has the only regional tax base sharing program successfully operating in the United States. The Minnesota Fiscal Disparities program works to reduce inter-community disparities while fostering economic development for the region. This program serves seven counties comprised of over 190 municipalities and more than 2.5 million people. This program was enacted by Minnesota state government in 1971 and implemented in 1975. The State of Minnesota saw this as one of the best options for addressing disparities between communities. Since this program was established in 1971, it has distributed 40% of the increase in commercial and property tax base. To distribute the tax base, an index is calculated for each local government jurisdiction, based on population and assessed property value. Administration of this program is rotated among the participating county governments. (Dodge 1996, pp. 164-165)

### **! Developing Regional Constituency in Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas**

The Regional Unity Program in the Dallas-Fort Worth region is directed toward community leaders to develop a regional constituency across political lines as well as fiscal, economic and racial disparities in order to develop a consensus-based coalition to address regional problems. This program brings leaders together to build relationships and establish trust at regional cultural events, baseball games, dinners, etc. It develops a broader understanding in community leaders about the importance of regional unity to effectively address regional problems through strategy and solution development. It does this through a speakers bureau, bringing together graduates of local leadership programs and conducting workshops and seminars to address regional challenges. (Dodge 1996, pp. 215-216).

# Defining St. Louis County's Role in Regional Leadership

There are several potential strategies that St. Louis County could take to strengthen its role in the region. One potential option, of course, is to remain at the status quo. But it is presumed that the status quo is not acceptable. The following options are just that—options. They are not yet recommendations. They arise from identified problems and from approaches tried both within the St. Louis area and by other communities. Whatever strategies are taken, it is important that the political, economic, and social realities be taken into consideration. It is also important that strategies can be initiated and produce measurable outcomes in the next five years.

## Regional Planning and Growth Management

### ! **Option 1: Implement the Initiative For A Metropolitan Community Recommendations**

With respect to the issue of urban sprawl, the County has the capability to lead the region in the area of coordinated growth management. The East-West Gateway Coordinating Council's Initiative for a Metropolitan Community released in April 1999 is a document that has 16 recommendations for developing a regional growth agenda for the metropolitan area that were arrived at through a collaborative process involving government officials from throughout the St. Louis region. While this initiative was spearheaded by the East-West Gateway Coordinating Council, it is incumbent upon the individual local governments to work together to implement these recommendations for growth management in the St. Louis region. As the largest and most central county in the region, St. Louis County is in an optimal position to build upon the East-West Gateway report and move it forward.

### ! **Option 2: Organize a Regional Coalition and Engage Citizens**

Addressing the recommendations asserted by the Initiative for a Metropolitan Community or developing other region-wide recommendations to tackle the issue of growth management could be done through the County Executive's initiative to form a collaborative regional council comprised of government officials, key interest group

representatives, and citizens to begin to further develop and implement the recommendations of the report. The County might want to begin this process by going out to citizens and key stakeholders in the St. Louis region to determine what are their primary concerns and suggestions regarding issues related to sprawl.

### ! **Option 3: Collaboratively Write and Lobby for State Legislation**

Using the models of the state legislation passed in Tennessee and Maryland, St. Louis County bring together legislative coalition consisting of municipal and county government representatives to develop legislation to introduce to the Missouri General Assembly. An ombudsman or dispute resolution facilitator should be on hand to help the group work toward consensus and address conflicts and difficulties.

### ! **Option 4: Facilitate Collaborative Leadership**

The most critical component of addressing the issue of growth management in the St. Louis region is to move away from the use of blame. The ability to successfully address such controversial and "turf-laden" issues such as growth management lies in developing a regional partnership and working from a collaborative, consensus-building approach. Clearly, this is a longer and more difficult road to take than retreating into parochial, isolated decision-making. But the bottom line is that the former will lead to constructive, long-term solutions, while the latter will lead to a collapsed, more fragmented, and even further dilapidated region. If

a collaborative regional council was developed to address this regional concern, a strong and tightly facilitated opportunity for dialogue might be an appropriate first step for the parties who come to the table.

**! Option 5: Build on Local Models of New Urbanism Communities**

In addressing planning from a regional perspective, the County has the ability to launch and oversee a collaborative regional council to address key issues using sustainability, regional problem-solving, and the concept of new urbanism at its core. New urbanism is a planning movement that promotes a stronger sense of community through more compact development, mixed land use (commercial and residential), a strong pedestrian orientation, active civic and community life, linkages between public transit and land use and higher housing densities. Many of the County's municipalities, such as Webster Groves, Kirkwood, Clayton, and Ferguson, model new urbanism concepts. These municipalities and other communities in the St. Louis region can be identified and brought together in an information-sharing and brainstorming session to begin thinking about these planning concepts on a more regional basis.

**Diversity**

The St. Louis region is highly segregated, with the majority of African Americans residing in the City of St. Louis, North St. Louis County, and parts of St. Clair County. Not surprisingly, these communities are some of the lowest-income parts of the region. So, how can the County take a regional leadership role to address the issue of racial disparity and race relations?

Peirce and Johnson noted in the Peirce Report on the St. Louis region that "blacks in the St. Louis area are much worse off than whites on such measures as living in poverty, unwed mothers, infant death rates, high school graduation, per-capita income." They go on to say that "race pervades every St. Louis regional issue. It feeds the sprawl and all the costs of sprawl as people run from inner-city minorities. It explains the disparities in school funding . . . . It

limits the geographic appeal of the new rail system because far-out suburbs don't want too easy a connection to the core."

**! Option 1: Conduct a Government Self-Assessment**

While the Lima and Columbus models have been effective for their communities, it is also very important for governments to assess their own workforce and "ways of doing business" to ensure that they are modeling an inclusive government and proactively working to fight institutional racism. It is important for public officials to understand the demographics that comprise their jurisdiction and the communities around them and how that diversity impacts policy decisions and practices.

- , County government can assess its internal demographics. Are those working on behalf of County residents truly representative of them?
- , County government can review its internal policies to ensure that they are bias-free.
- , County government can review its external policies to ensure that they are bias-free.
- , County government can examine all of its current initiatives and commissions to ensure that they are comprised of a demographically diverse group of people who are all equally involved in the decision-making process.

**! Option 2: Take a Stand**

The County can speak out publicly and more forcefully against racism and consider the following actions:

- , The County can ensure that it models respect for diversity by having a workforce that is representative of the population it serves and by working with the St. Louis Minority Business Council to develop a policy for increasing its business with local, minority-owned businesses.
- , The County could be the first governmental entity in the region to actively follow-through on *Covenant 2004*, a private industry covenant geared toward supporting minority business development. This Covenant was endorsed by the County in 1997.
- , The County Executive and elected officials can take a greater leadership role in the CommUnity St. Louis and the 2004 race

relations efforts by being a more vocal advocate and active participant in these initiatives.

**! Option 3: Collaborative Decision Making**

County officials can work harder to ensure that major decision-making is done collaboratively by involving a wide variety of citizens that represent their diverse constituencies. The County can effectively bring diverse groups of stakeholders together to work in partnership to address different regional issues, such as growth management, MetroLink, etc. Each of these issues has as much to do with race and racism as they do with establishing boundaries and expanding transportation services.

**Coordination Between Governmental Entities**

Some of the best practices outlined below may be too far-reaching for the St. Louis region at this time, but they do provide a sense of the innovation and region-wide implications of intergovernmental collaborations. With respect to St. Louis County, the County can adopt pieces of these models by beginning to think and plan in new and innovative ways. Following are some possible recommendations for the County to exert regional leadership with respect to intergovernmental collaboration.

**! Option 1: Be a Regional Advocate**

With the success of the Empowerment Zone application process as a leading example of the power of intergovernmental cooperation in the St. Louis region, the County should become a greater public advocate for and initiator of regional initiatives.

**! Option 2: Institute Quarterly Regional Government Caucuses**

Similar to the effort in the Chicago region to convene the mayors from the 269 municipalities in region, the County Executive can initiate such meetings between government officials from both county and municipal governments throughout the

region to address regional issues and develop regional strategies to address them.

**! Option 3: Explore Existing County Information Technology Capacities and Opportunities to Enhance Regional Problem-Solving**

County government can begin to explore in what ways it could become technologically networked with municipal governments, county governments and the State of Missouri. It could begin to explore options of information technology linkages in the areas of criminal justice, health and human services, and service delivery.

**! Option 4: Develop and Promote Regional Economic Development Initiative**

The County Economic Council can continue to expand its portfolio of regional economic development initiatives, institutionalize these into regional leadership models of collaboration, and develop a library of lessons-learned.

**! Option 5: Collaborate with the Regional Report Card Initiative to Develop Regional Benchmarks**

St. Louis County can take the lead in establishing an intergovernmental coalition to work with the United Way of Greater St. Louis on the Regional Report Card, using each indicator as a benchmark for establishing regional initiatives and regional improvement campaigns. This could also take the form of a regional public-private-nonprofit coalition.

**! Option 6: Partner with Regional Community Organizations**

St. Louis County can more actively partner with regional community organizations such as FOCUS St. Louis, East-West Gateway, St. Louis 2004, CommUnity St. Louis, the United Way of Greater St. Louis, etc. to develop regional strategies for addressing critical issues. In conjunction with these organizations, the County can develop citizen outreach and engagement processes; facilitate, issue-specific, consensus building workshops; implement conflict resolution strategies; develop a government officials regional leadership program;

and tackle regional issues systematically and collaboratively.

! **Option 7: Develop Greater Intra-County Collaboration**

Within St. Louis County itself, the County can form an intergovernmental coalition to meet quarterly with mayors and city managers from all municipalities invited to engage in a facilitated dialogue about County-wide issues. If the County does not model intergovernmental collaboration and partnering, it will have a hard time being a regional leader in this area. The fragmentation of the County needs to be addressed as much as the fragmentation of the region.

! **Option 8: Forge a Stronger City-County Partnership**

The County Executive could initiate quarterly, strategic planning sessions with the Mayor of the City of St. Louis. Because so many citizens expressed concern over the division between the City and the County, the elected leadership needs to pro-actively come together to work toward common ground on key regional issues. It would be of great service to regional planning efforts if these conversations occurred prior to the eruption of interest groups and parochial disagreements.

Conclusion

St. Louis County has many options in terms of exerting itself as a regional leader in general, and in particular regarding the issues outlined in this background paper. Clearly, the County will have to decide how prominent of a regional leader it wants to be by working to pro-actively implement all, some or none of the options for action outlined in this paper. The options presented here, however, are springboard ideas from which others might be generated. As the reader of this paper and a critical member of the task force, please feel free to embrace, challenge, revise, or restructure the options outlined here as we begin to strategically develop St. Louis County's role as a regional leader in the next five years.

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